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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS) Family patterns and roles of Spanish-Americans and implications of transferrence of folk culture to an urban setting are analyzed. Strong family cohesiveness is created by isolation, lack of mobility, an agrarian economy, and the Pueblo Indian influence of small villages. Blood kinships are sought out and maintained, and are extended by a system of godparents whose relationships of love and care are equal to those of the immediate family. The rural society is paternalistic, with the father heading the family and educating and disciplining the male children, while the mother is solely responsible for domestic duties, educating the daughters and closely supervising and shielding them.

When such a family moves to an urban setting, its beliefs and mores are shattered. The father, who is used to being the dominant male and chief provider, cannot compete successfully in an industrialized society and is soon frustrated, confused, and demoralized by female social workers, impersonal institutions, and the necessity of accepting welfare. The mother must assume responsibilities formerly the province of her husband, and the reversal of their roles creates dissension. Similar conflicts of transition and adjustment are encountered by the children. They are exposed to a different set of values in school, are sometimes discriminated against, and become ashamed of their home and parents. Male children, who have been allowed great freedom in their agrarian setting, are subjected to many temptations of city life, and females, formerly closely supervised, are left alone while their parents are working.

It is emphasized that when the parents can bridge the cultural transition and hold their marriage together, the children usually succeed in making the adjustment also. The charge is made that social agencies should therefore concentrate on strenthening family life of Spanish-Americans rather than devoting all their attention to detention, correction, and rehabilitation.

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IMPLICATIONS OF SPANISH-AMERICAN CULTURE ON FAMILY LIFE

By Bernard Valdez, Consultant
Dept. of Institutions

THE CENTER FOR CULTURAL STUDIES
Adams State College of Colorado
Alamosa

The Spanish-American, living in isolation in small villages for several centuries, has developed very distinct family patterns. Isolation, lack of mobility, agrarian economy, and the Pueblo Indian influence combined to create an environment conducive to extreme family cohesiveness.

The family pattern of the Spanish folk culture is basically paternalistic. This pattern dominates the whole family structure. The father is the head of the family. This role is carried on by the oldest male member of the family, and it is relinquished only upon death. In this structure, the grandfather is in effect the authority figure and titular head of the family clan.

IMMEDIATE FAMILY

Family blood relationships retain an intimate association for as long as these relationships are traceable. Blood kinships are sought out and maintained. Grandparents, grandchildren, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, and cousins, regardless of the degree of kinship, retain almost the same attachment as brothers and sisters. The lack of mobility tends to fortify and extend the immediate family structure.

EXTENDED FAMILY

The Spanish folk culture family is not confined to members related by blood or marriage. It is extended by a complexity of spiritual relationships recognized by the church and fostered by tradition. This system of family extensions has been tagged by the sociologists as "El Compadrazgo."

Godparents are used for such occasions as baptisms, confirmations and weddings. Godparents serving in any of these occasions become "compadres" to the natural parents of the child or children involved. "Compadres" thereby assume the same intimate associations as blood relatives. The godparents also assume the role of second parents to the child, and the child is trained to treat his godparents with honor and respect due the natural parents. The solicitudes which follow in terms of gifts and affection produce a bond of love, thereby making the extended family relationships equal to those of the immediate family.

To appreciate fully the potential growth of family extensions in this culture setting, let us assume a hypothetical family with five children.

By the very fact that the husband and wife have been baptized, confirmed, and married, they start their married life with an extended family of ten persons. With the baptisms, confirmation, and marriage of their children, they will acquire an extended relationship to 30 more people for a total of forty. If this family is invited to reciprocate the same functions with their friends, then the potential is limitless. This chain reaction of family extensions is interrelated to blood relationships, since very often blood relations will serve as godparents to blood relatives.

THE VILLAGE

Because the pattern of colonization of the villages originated on a family basis, the village in fact is nothing more than a family extension. Even after three hundred years of colonization, it is not uncommon to find isolated villages with not more than a half-dozen surnames. Blood relations and extended relations criss-cross the whole village population.

FAMILY ROLES

The Father It has already been stated that the father is the head of his immediate family. In the agrarian society, he is concerned with planting and

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harvesting, providing shelter and food for his family. This role of being the chief provider is never relinquished, nor is it assumed by anyone else, except in cases of illness or extreme emergency. During periods of crisis, the family will come to the rescue and fulfill any need occasioned by the emergency. The family members always stand ready to meet their moral responsibility. This assistance may vary from temporary economic assistance and nursing care during illness to foster parenthood for orphaned children.

The Mother The mother is responsible for all domestic duties. She is responsible for training her daughters in domestic duties. She is traditionally expected to be frugal and ingenious in running her household but is never expected to work outside the home. By the same token, the husband or male children are not expected to do household chores.

Male Children Boys are trained by the father to perform duties traditionally assigned to males. The discipline of boys is the responsibility of the father. Boys are allowed a lot of freedom on the assumption that this will prepare them to assume their male roles.

Female Children Girls are trained by the mother to assume the responsibility of homemaking. They are not allowed much freedom and are closely supervised and shielded from male contacts.

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Dating is not allowed. Romance develops as a result of contact at fiestas, dances, and family gatherings. Romance between young people is not recognized by parents until engagement occurs. Engagement is a very formal process by which the parents of the intended groom will solicit the parents of the intended bride for the proposed marriage. This process will assure the complete approval of both families.

IMPLICATIONS OF FAMILY STRUCTURE

The implications of the Spanish folk culture family which is confronted with the complexities of urban life are numerous. It is difficult to assess the emotional strain involved for the family that leaves the village for the urban center in search of a livelihood. The father, mother, and their children are not a complete family in the Spanish folk family sense. All the blood relatives and extended family relations are missing from the concept of the complete family.

The father, whose orientation in an agrarian economy has been geared to nature, now becomes enmeshed in the gears of a machine. His lack of industrial skills, limited education, limited use of English, his religion, his customs and culture, make him a misfit as an urban worker. His inability to compete results in sporadic employment, the lowest wage levels, insecurity, and poverty. His inability to maintain his role as the sole provider of his family starts to erode his male ego. His humiliation in begging for public assistance from female social workers destroys his concepts of male dominance. The endless interrogations by a myriad of impersonal institutions demanding scores of forms and signatures and the inevitable shuffle from agency to agency leaves him confused, frustrated and demoralized. He is soon made aware that he functions in a culture dominated by female figures, and in self defense, he begins to push his wife forward as a shield to his male pride.

The mother soon finds herself assuming responsibilities formerly assumed by the husband. She becomes aware that other mothers and married women are employed out of the home and that very often it is easier for her to secure employment than it is for her husband. Often, sheer necessity will force the husband to allow his wife to work out of the home. This practice, which is perfectly acceptable in Anglo-American families, will cause the husband to lose face and self-respect.

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At this point, the process of emancipation from paternalistic traditions begins for the mother:

1. She demands assistance with domestic duties which traditionally she has assumed, and which the husband resists taking over.
2. She attempts to have a voice in the management of family funds, while the husband interprets it as an invasion of his rights.
3. She resents pregnancies as an economical and physical handicap, while the husband will interpret this resentment as a rejection of his affections.
4. She will become overly permissive with her daughters in the light of her changing values, thereby creating discord and dissension for the whole family.
5. Her newly acquired role will demand that she make decisions formerly made only by the husband, thereby adding to the confusion of roles and diminishing status of the husband.

While the parents are undergoing the process of transition and readjustment from one set of values, which they understand, to another set which is strange to them, their children will encounter similar conflicts.

The first doubt will arise at the point where the children realize their difference from their playmates and school companions. Their complete ignorance regarding their ethnic identification or historical origin will frustrate and confuse them. Their awareness and recognition of the obvious differences such as the language of their parents or food habits in their home will cause them to feel ashamed of their home and parents.

Following the phase where the children become aware of their ethnic differences it is only a question of time until they face the first manifestations of rejection. Generally, these manifestations will arise in the playground or in the classroom in the form of name-calling. The seed of hatred and resentment will have been sown, and the pattern of conflict with their environment set.

This pattern of conflict is soon brought into the home. Male children with an allowance of excess freedoms in the agrarian setting find themselves subject to the many temptations and delinquency pitfalls of city life. The female children, closely supervised in the multi-family setting of the village culture, are left unsupervised while the father and mother are employed outside the home.

If the father and mother are successful in bridging the cultural transition and in holding their marriage together, they will remain as the bulwark of strength to their children and help them in their own cultural transition. If the parents should fail to make the adjustment and the family breaks down, a chain reaction of family disintegration is sure to follow.

The children of the Spanish folk family living in the urban center face many problems of adjustment. Some of those problems involve the whole spectrum of cultural concepts. Some of the most important concepts involve attitudes toward educational achievement, competition, material achievement, time orientation, leadership and organization, and success. All of these differences can be bridged without sacrificing human values, if the family structure remains strong and secure.

We have scores of agencies and we spend millions of dollars in the areas of detention, correction, and rehabilitation. We spend a great deal more in providing economic assistance through categorized public welfare and other public institutions. Nearly all of these resources are spent to cure the symptoms of family disintegration.

We are doing almost nothing in the area of strengthening family life - we are instead preoccupied in dealing with the pieces after disintegration takes place.